



Settler Colonialism, George Grey and the Politics of Ethnography

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Introduction

This articles suggests that ethnography and colonial governance were constitutive of each other, and co-constitutive with the construction of an unprecedentedly extensive empire. I argue that the combination of ethnographic expertise and governmental power was embodied particularly clearly in the figure of George Grey, who helped consolidate the British settler colonies, and who also also provided the British empire as a whole with a powerful legitimization as a *humane* form of rule. The humane-ness of this rule lay in a form of cultural genocide, posited as the sole alternative to the eradication of entire races. Grey achieved these outcomes through extensive, and previously unexplored, networks of communication and influence connecting South Australian, New Zealand, South African and British places, among others distributed across an imperial terrain. The texts that he formulated and circulated and the uses to which they were put at these different sites, comprised an extraordinarily potent and geographically extensive ethnographic-governmental assemblage.

George Grey’s particular articulation between ethnographic research in settler colonies and the art of governmentality produced a discourse and a policy of assimilation (or what he called amalgamation). While the relationship between early anthropology and colonial governmentality, specifically form of indirect rule, has been identified in late nineteenth century Indian and African contexts, and in more recent American military ventures abroad (Asad 1973; Scholte 1975; Pels and Salemink, 1999; Lugard 1930; Meek, 1937; Ludden, 1992; Dirks, 1992; Cohn 1996), Grey’s ethnographic-governmentality was developed even as British colonization

was being effected, and at the highest level of both colonial and imperial governments. Moreover, Grey's ethnography sustained the notion that initial, violent colonisation, mass invasion and dispossession, was liberal. As Patrick Wolfe has argued, there has been a close relationship between ethnographic and governmental practice in the settler colonies of North America, southern Africa and Australasia. The genesis of anthropology is critical to Wolfe's assertion, underpinning the recent emergence of "settler colonial studies" as a distinct field of scholarship, that settler "invasion is a structure not an event" (Wolfe 1999, 2, Veracini 2010). But the effect of Grey's ethnographic and governmental activities, directed at reconfiguring the lives of individual Indigenous peoples around the projects of the settler state, has as yet been under-appreciated even in this body of work. "Amalgamation" entailed both the elimination of Indigenous society and the transfer of its territory on the one hand, and the duty of care to Indigenous *individuals* newly assimilated into settler societies on the other.

It was this duty of care which rendered colonial *humanitarian* governance a relatively novel enterprise during the early nineteenth century (Lester and Dussart, 2014). In a colonial context, ever since the beginnings of slave amelioration policies in the 1810s, humanitarian reason has existed not solely in the extra-governmental realm of the NGO or the political lobby; it has also "serve[d] both to define and to justify discourses and practices of the government of human beings" (Fassin 2012, 2). Humanitarianism enables specifically a mode of governing the "moral economy of suffering" within a society by dealing with the precariousness of subjects (Fassin 2012, 2; Reid Henry 2014). While the consequences of natural disasters within Europe, for instance, could not be left to go untended without the imposition of state order (Foucault 1979), the same could be said of the violent destruction of

indigenous societies in the settler colonies. The annihilation of such societies could not (generally) be allowed because of a modern state's imperative to control, regulate and as far as possible monopolise the violence of colonization. Humanitarian regulation as a function of government – a way of *being* governmental – was thus as intrinsic to the project of Britain's colonization of other lands as it was to the coeval emergence of a modern state system in Europe.

The prevailing practice of humanitarian governance in settler colonies, which Grey directly inherited in South Australia and New Zealand, was that of Protection. Whilst it emphasised their ultimate "civilization" and integration with settler communities, Protection also entailed preserving Indigenous communities' access to land and treating with them, to a certain extent as if they were still sovereign peoples within specific locales (Lester and Dussart 2014). It was in effecting an end to this particular form of humanitarian governance in settler societies, and providing both the legitimation for, and experiments with, the practice of "amalgamation" or assimilation, that Grey's intersecting ethnographic and governmental expertise proved so potent and its effects so enduring.

George Grey

Grey was "among the builders of Empire in the Southern Hemisphere" (Henderson, 1907, xiii). His "reputation – and debates about it – span the English-speaking world" (Dale, 2006, 147). Grey's personal contacts certainly numbered among the most famous people of his lifetime, including Charles Darwin, Charles Lyell, Thomas Carlyle, Florence Nightingale and Queen Victoria (Milne, 1899; Grant, 2005).¹ And

¹ It was in his correspondence with Grey that Darwin used the phrase "origin of species" on perhaps the first occasion (Grant 2005, 66).

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3 yet, partly because of the loss of his personal papers in a fire, and largely because of
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5 his performative dexterity, Grey remains also one of the most enigmatic of imperial
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7 figures. His biographer noted that “he has been denounced as an autocrat and a
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9 Conservative and hailed as a great Liberal and a radical reformer”; portrayed as “an
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11 ambitious self-seeker who humbugged the authorities by professions of philanthropy”
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13 and “a genuine humanitarian pursuing high ideals by dubious methods which
14
15 exposed him to misinterpretation” (Rutherford, 1961, v; Berg, 1999).
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19 We can understand ambivalent figures like Grey and other colonial governors only if
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21 we conceive of them as individual subjects attempting to gain capacity within an
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23 assemblage of governmentality that was both territorialised and discursive (see
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25 DeLanda 2006 in general and Lester 2012 for colonial governmentality). If Grey’s
26
27 own identity was a complex, dynamic, embodied assemblage at one scale, the
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29 discourse of colonial governance in which he played a key role constituted an
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31 assembled identity of a different kind and scale - one that was dispersed and
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33 embodied differentially in different people. This discourse causally affected the
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35 people that were its component parts, limiting them and enabling them. As a
36
37 definable assemblage, colonial governmentality had both material and expressive
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39 components. It was expressed above all by language that took material form in the
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41 words of texts and the images that travelled to sustain governmental networks. Grey
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43 would prove particularly adept at mobilizing such language and disseminating it,
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45 acquiring capacity within, and ability to shape, governmentality.
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51 In 1830, commissioned as an ensign, Grey had been posted to Ireland, where he
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53 served for three or four years. In most biographical narratives, Grey’s uncomfortable
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55 experiences there persuaded him of the necessity for a liberal empire. Although
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57 instructed to counter an organised boycott of tithes he could not help himself being
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inspired by Daniel O’Connell’s nationalist oratory. Rather than being the cause of the conflict between his loyalty and his sympathy, however, the British Empire offered Grey a resolution to it. As Keith Sinclair put it, “appalled by the poverty of the Irish people ... He reached the conclusion that emigration was the solution to Ireland’s ills: new nations should be established, in lands of opportunity for the poor” (Sinclair, 2012, np).

Dale (2006) has revisited this Irish period in Grey’s formative years, questioning the notion that the lesson he learned was that of emigration and liberal imperial reform. Rather, Ireland served as the arena in which Grey learned how to narrativise his ambivalent behaviours for multiple audiences. Thus, although Grey left Ireland after three or four years to return to Sandhurst for further military training, he made it seem in later accounts, reproduced by subsequent biographers, as though the experience of service there had so radicalised him that he chose to leave the army and pursue a career as a colonial explorer, in order to help realise his vision of benevolent imperial expansion in new lands. The account of his experiences that the older Grey narrated to his first biographer was certainly inflected with the trope of individual transformation characteristic of the evangelical narratives that were popular during the 1830s (Milne, 1899).

After exploring in Western Australia Grey acted briefly as magistrate in Albany. He used his few months in office there to very good effect in the promotion of his career in Britain. Not only did he publish his exploratory journal and a vocabulary of Aboriginal languages, to which I will return below; he also appended to his journal a pamphlet entitled *Report on the Best Means of Promoting the Civilization of the Aboriginal Inhabitants of Australia*, which outlined a scheme for the humane governance of Aboriginal people undergoing settler colonization (Grey, 1840).

The *Report* acquired tremendous significance for Grey's later career, as both governor and ethnographer. It enabled Grey to acquire considerably enhanced capacity within those networks through which the art of colonial government was inscribed. Grey promoted it assiduously, via James Stephen, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office in London, who enclosed it with the instructions sent to James Hobson for his first Lieutenant Governorship of New Zealand, as a potential model for humane governance of the Māori. It was published in Parliamentary Papers and republished in periodicals in Britain and the Australian colonies. As Damon Salesa notes, the report actually "contained little that was original. Its strength was that it tied together many diverse approaches to which the Colonial Office was already sympathetic, with a few detailed touches that were Grey's own". Nevertheless its effect was, in the words of Colonial Secretary Lord John Russell, to render Grey "a man destined to reclaim an aboriginal race and amalgamate them with civilization" (Salesa, 2011, 108).

Not only did his *Report* secure a reputation for Grey at a young age, it also provided him with a template for governmentality that he would seek to effect throughout his own gubernatorial career. The contact that he had made with James Stephen enabled Grey to embark upon the governorship of South Australia, aged only twenty-eight, after his return to England, and it was there that he acquired particular favour with the Colonial Office for reversing the colony's slide into insolvency and complete dependence on the British exchequer (Dale, 2008).

Understandings of Race

In much of the historical and geographical literature on racial thought, the mid-nineteenth century features as a key disjuncture. Beforehand, evangelical ideas of

human universality – the same ideas that had fostered the antislavery movement in Britain and across the Atlantic – had accompanied a monogenetic and stadial understanding of human progress (see Livingstone 2008). Afterwards, historians of science and race have suggested, a biologically determinist understanding of race, associated in part with polygenetic explanations of human origins and encouraged by social Darwinism, became dominant (Lorimer, 1978, Stepan 1982, Anderson 2007). Yet, scientific racism, founded upon a notion of innate and irreparable human difference, was not a consensual nor a hegemonic understanding, let alone a key legitimization for empire, in most of the later nineteenth century. Rather, a liberal and Christian, monogenetic interpretation of race continued to dominate in both scientific and popular discourse (Lorimer, 2013, 8; Livingstone, 2008). While such ideas remained hegemonic, however, they proved flexible enough to accommodate notions of immutability derived from the politicized arguments of planters, settlers and their metropolitan supporters. In particular, these ideas could be accommodated with an evolution - inflected understanding that colonized races' progress towards civilization would take thousands of years, rather than a generation or two. And that was if certain races were going to persist at all.

While there had long been expectations of the rise and fall of particular civilizations, it was the relatively new notion of dying *races* that was most significant for Grey's career as both a persuasive ethnographer and a humanitarian governor. During the early part of the century, it was well known that species of flora and fauna, such as the dodo, rendered extinct in the seventeenth century, had disappeared as the result of human action. But endemic extinction, as a result of "nature" itself was, as yet, inconceivable. As Sadiya Qureshi explains, "accepting extinction as a feature of the natural world posed several difficulties ... For many theists and deists alike, the

possibility of extinction appeared to undermine the perfection one might expect of a natural world designed by a Supreme Being. Moreover, it contradicted the notion of natural plenitude: the widely accepted proposition that all possible forms of existence, whether living or not, had existed and would continue to do so" (Qureshi, 2013a, 3). Following especially Cuvier's analysis of fossil elephants as a distinct species, however, European scientists began to accept that extinction could be a "natural" process, even outside of human agency (Qureshi, 2013b, 270). It was not, therefore something for which human culpability was necessary.

Such an understanding raised the possibility of a revised rather than abandoned, stadial theory, pertaining to the natural divisions within humanity itself. It was not necessarily the same peoples who progressively moved from hunter-gathering through pastoralism and agriculture to commerce, but rather, groups more advanced along this scale may have rendered extinct more backward human populations. They would have done so with no more premeditated malice than the environmental changes and inter-species competition that had caused the disappearance of the fossil elephants. Those who professed humanity found it regrettable nonetheless, and these revised understandings of the fate of races encountering more advanced peoples would have implications for colonial governance.

As we have seen, at the time that Grey first started to gain influence as a young explorer, the dominant governmental discourse of humane colonization in the expanding British settler colonies centred upon the idea of Protection. This meant, in effect, the preservation of Indigenous life and resources in the midst of settler invasion. It was a project entrusted to a handful of officials given the title of Protector of Aborigines in Australia and New Zealand. These men were organised within official Protectorate governmental departments that were modelled on the offices

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3 established for the protection of slaves in the Caribbean during the era of the
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5 amelioration. Given magisterial powers, the Protectors' role was to shield their
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7 Indigenous charges from settler violence and dispossession. They had also had a
8
9 remit of introducing British civilization and Christianity to their Indigenous 'recipients',
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11 on reserved landholdings, although most lacked the resources and support to
12
13 attempt such a civilizing mission (Lester and Dussart, 2014). Their task seemed
14
15 particularly futile in the face of the rapid and violently destructive colonization of the
16
17 Port Philip District (now Victoria). There, rates of Aboriginal population decline were
18
19 around 90 per cent, with direct massacres rather than introduced diseases
20
21 "responsible for the deaths of more than 11 per cent of the known Aboriginal
22
23 population", between 1836 and 1851 (Ryan 2010, 257).
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28 Within the British Empire, it was the contemporaneous fate of Van Diemen's Land's
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30 Aboriginal population, however, which seemed most persuasive of the new
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32 understanding that human extinction could itself be a 'natural', if unfortunate, process.
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34 Aboriginal "eradication" in Tasmania came, widely and quickly, to be understood in
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36 Britain as an inevitable consequence of the spread of a more advanced people and
37
38 civilization (for accounts of the guerrilla war which underlay this discourse of
39
40 eradication see Reynolds 1995, Ryan 1996, Boyce, 2009). As the first empirical
41
42 example of a supposedly dying race, Tasmania's Aboriginal people loomed large in
43
44 mid- to late- nineteenth century British discourse (Lawson 2014). Through
45
46 newspapers, travel writing, art exhibitions, museum displays and the scientific
47
48 appropriation of bodily remains, metropolitan audiences learned the lesson from
49
50 Tasmania that, much as it might be regretted, such was Europeans', and especially
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52 Britons' power, other races would simply fade away before them as they spread their
53
54 influence around the world (Lawson 2014; McGregor, 1997).
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3 It was this understanding, based upon practical experience in Australasia, which
4 gave rise to the origins of ethnography as a project of salvage (Sera-Shriar, 2013).
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6 Just as the collection of disappearing species of flora and fauna, and their
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8 preservation in zoological or botanical gardens became central to the developing
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10 biological sciences, the “sudden and traumatic” awareness “of the destructive impact
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12 of European civilization on native peoples and their cultures” gave rise to the
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14 collection of information on dying races as the basis for the new science of
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16 ethnography. “In the face of the inevitable and necessary changes, in the face of an
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18 almost infinite variety of man whose details were essential to a definition of man, the
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20 obligation of both scientist and humanist was clear: he must collect and preserve the
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22 information and the products of human activity and genius so rapidly being destroyed”
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24 (Gruber 1970, 1290).
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30 Before the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS) in 1839,
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32 James Cowles Prichard outlined the tone for an emergent anthropology:
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36 Wherever Europeans have settled, their arrival has been the harbinger of
37
38 extermination to the native tribes ... Now, as the progress of colonization is so
39
40 much extended of late years, and the obstacle of distance and physical
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42 difficulties are so much overcome, it may be calculated that these
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44 calamities ... are to be accelerated in their progress; and it may happen that,
45
46 in the course of another century, the aboriginal nations of most parts of the
47
48 world will have ceased entirely to exist. In the meantime, if Christian nations
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50 think it not their duty to interpose and save the numerous tribes of their own
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52 species from utter extermination, it is of the greatest importance ... to obtain
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54 much more extensive information than we now possess of their physical and
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56 moral characters. A great number of curious problems in physiology ... remain
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as yet imperfectly solved. The psychology of these races has been but little studied in an enlightened manner; and yet this is wanting in order to complete the history of human nature, and the philosophy of the human mind. How can this be obtained when so many tribes shall have become extinct, and their thoughts shall have perished with them? (Prichard, 1839, 1).

The BAAS responded to Prichard's appeal by printing and circulating a series of questions and suggestions for the use of travellers and others, "with a view to procure information respecting the different races of men, and more especially those which are in an uncivilized state" (BAAS, 1839, xxvi; Sera-Shriar, 2013). A committee was appointed to draw up the questions, including Charles Darwin as member and Prichard as chairman. In its report two years later, the committee dwelt upon the "absolute necessity for pursuing the work if anything valuable and satisfactory is to be accomplished; seeing that the races in question are not only changing character, but rapidly disappearing" (BAAS, 1841, 332-3391).

Grey's Report

If the Indigenous peoples of Britain's settler colonies (and of the USA's proliferating western territories) were dying out, then it was clear that the project of official Protection had failed. One of the key questions for colonial governors during the later 1840s and 1850s, then, was how to perpetuate the legacy of humanitarian colonial governance, inherited from the emancipationist, evangelical 1830s and early 1840s. The problem was especially acute given that settler communities were pressing for political responsibility to be transferred from the restraining hand of the British metropolitan government to the very colonisers whose acts of violent dispossession

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3 had compelled humanitarian intervention in the first place. George Grey, I suggest,
4 provided perhaps the most persuasive and explicit rationalisation of the dilemma and
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6
7 answer to this problem – an answer that proved satisfactory to the Colonial Office
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10 and, it would seem, to most Britons. But he was able to do so only by virtue of the
11
12 fact that he was admired as both governor and an ethnographer and because he
13
14 wrote from and governed particular sites of settler colonization. These were the
15
16 characteristics that credited him with particular capacity within the mutually
17
18 imbricated discursive assemblages of governmentality and the emergent field of
19
20 ethnography. The Colonial office had Grey's *Report* from Western Australia
21
22 published and circulated the year before Prichard's explicit call for a salvage
23
24 ethnography. Grey himself would soon become one of the most influential
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26 contributors to that project and at the same time, one of the most powerful figures in
27
28 the governance of empire. Both trajectories were furthered by the *Report* itself.
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33 Grey began his *Report* by noting that all previous attempts to civilise Aboriginal
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35 people in the Australian colonies had failed. This, he argued, was because colonial
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37 policies were founded on the protective principle that, until such time as Aboriginal
38
39 people proved amenable to British laws, they should be allowed to exercise "their
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41 own customs upon themselves". Whilst originating in the "Philanthropic motives" that
42
43 were manifested in the Protectorates, such a position betrayed an ignorance of the
44
45 real nature of these customs and of their effects upon the individuals subjected to
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47 them. Australia's Aboriginal people, as all good humanitarians knew, were "as apt
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49 and intelligent as any other race of men", but as long as their code of laws prevailed,
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51 it would be impossible for them ever to "emerge from a Savage state". Even a highly
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53 endowed, civilised race, Grey asserted, would quickly be reduced once more to
54
55 savagery if such laws were ever to be imposed upon them (Grey, 1840, np).
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The only solution was to insist, “from the moment the Aborigines of this Country are declared British subjects”, that ‘they are taught that the British laws are to supersede their own’. Far from being an aggressive assertion of sovereignty by right of conquest, this was “the course of true humanity”. Such an act would give recourse to individual Aborigines who suffered “under their own customs”, whilst enjoining “all authorised persons” to “protect a native from the violence of his fellows, even though they be in the execution of their own laws”. Individual indigenous people persuaded of the benefits of British civilisation might thus have an escape route from imprisoning and retarding customs (Grey, 1840, np).

In order to exemplify, Grey invoked the kind of figure upon which antislavery and evangelical humanitarian narratives had centred in their attempts to garner compassion at a distance, writing of “almost or quite civilized ... girls who have been betrothed in their infancy, and who, on approaching years of puberty, have been compelled by their husbands to join them” in the bush. Such “barbarous laws” would “destroy and overturn” any strides made by Aboriginal individuals (Grey, 1840, np).

From the law, the *Report* moved next to the question of labour. Noting that Aborigines were employed by settlers too sporadically, infrequently and for too low a rate of return to provide an alternative to their “fondness for the bush”, Grey suggested that the most natural remedy in the longer term might be a system of proper schooling for Aboriginal children in order to inculcate the habits of skilled labour. Grey’s more immediate solution was that the current system by which settlers could be rewarded for introducing British labourers to the colonies be diverted, so as to reward settlers who brought Aboriginal people into paid employment, largely through remission in the purchase of land. Not only would such settlers still be helping to relieve the colony’s labour shortages, they would also confer benefit on

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3 their fellow settlers “by rendering one who was before a useless and dangerous
4 being, a serviceable member of the community” (Grey, 1840, np).

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8 Rather than shielding their charges from settlers, Protectors of Aborigines should
9 take on the duty of certifying that settlers were engaged in providing productive
10 employment of them. Aboriginal people should be employed not only on private
11 settler farms but also in public projects such as “opening New Roads, or in repairing
12 old lines of communication”. Finally, Grey proposed that individual Aborigines who
13 had demonstrated their capacity and perseverance by working in this manner for
14 three years, be allocated land and capital with which to establish themselves as self-
15 reliant members of colonial society (Grey, 1840).

16
17 In his *Report*, then, even before he contributed to an incipient international discourse
18 of dying races, Grey had begun subtly to recast the role of Aboriginal protectors. The
19 protection of Indigenous peoples was a project doomed to failure once they were
20 confronted by British immigration. Their duty should consist instead in promoting the
21 most effectual amalgamation of those peoples.

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Grey's Ethnography

There was an obvious instrumentality to Grey's ethnography. His ethnographic study could simply be interpreted as a strategy of knowing your enemy. As he himself put it in the preface to a later Māori ethnography, “I soon perceived that I could neither successfully govern, nor hope to conciliate, a numerous and turbulent people, with whose language, manners, customs, religion, and modes of thought I was quite unacquainted” (Grey, 1855, iii). But I want to develop a more subtle argument about the effects of Grey's ethnographic work and its relation to imperial governmentality.

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3 By contributing significantly to the emerging science of ethnography from the late
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5 1830s, Grey helped to establish that any policies which aimed to do more than just
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7 smooth the pillow of inevitably dying Indigenous races could be considered a worthy
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9 humanitarian intervention. It was Grey's ethnographic endeavours, following on from
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11 the reputation gained by his *Report*, which persuaded both him and a large trans-
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13 imperial constituency, that amalgamation was not simply an expedient governmental
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15 exercise; it was the only humane alternative to extermination, and thus the only
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17 means of exercising practical rather than merely sentimental humanitarianism.
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21 Grey's ethnographic knowledge acquired a status among men of science because of
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23 his prolific correspondence with those securing the establishment of ethnography in
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25 Britain (see Sera-Shriar, 2013). The incipient discipline was, from the very beginning,
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27 bound up with the development of humanitarian governance. The convergence
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29 between these twin projects was embodied especially in Thomas Hodgkin, the
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31 Quaker, Demonstrator in Anatomy, and, in the wake of the 1836-7 Select Committee
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33 on Aborigines, founder of the Aborigines Protection Society (APS). It was Hodgkin
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35 who had prompted Prichard's intervention at the 1839 BAAS. As a result of the
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37 evidence presented to the Aborigines Committee, and from his own extensive
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39 networks of Quaker and other correspondents in the colonies, Hodgkin had become
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41 concerned by the late 1830s that British colonization was threatening to exterminate
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43 Indigenous cultures entirely (Rainger, 1980; see Laidlaw, 2007 for Hodgkin's own
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45 vast international correspondent networks). He had first proposed that the
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47 Philological Society should draw up a set of queries which could be circulated to
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49 interested parties on colonial frontiers in 1835. They would be designed to elicit vital
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51 information about the physiology, customs and languages of indigenous peoples
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53 before they became extinct. But despite the appointment of a committee and
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Hodgkin's circulation of a paper to its members, that scheme petered out. Once he had helped formed the APS, Hodgkin tried again, with more success.

Rainger describes this convergence of scientific and philanthropic motive:

What later would be defined as essentially a scientific enterprise was employed for the purpose of "correcting" false assumptions about aboriginal peoples – especially the belief that they were naturally inferior or devoid of physical or intellectual capabilities –in the hope that more humane treatment of them and the eventual improvement of their condition would follow (Rainger, 1980, 706).

In 1839, Hodgkin was able to utilize the heightened concern for indigenous peoples that the Aborigines Committee had aroused, persuading Prichard, himself raised a Quaker and an honorary member of the APS, to read his paper at the Birmingham meeting of the BAAS (on Prichard's significance as Britain's leading ethnographer, and his own networks of correspondents, see Urry, 1972; Augstein, 1999; Livingstone, 2008; Qureshi, 2011; on the APS see Rainger, 1980, Swaisland, 2000, Heartfield 2011). Hodgkin's intention was to help publicize the APS among Britain's leading men of science. Prichard duly praised the work of the APS at the same time that he helped to outline what has come to be known as the project of salvage ethnography in his BAAS paper (Prichard, 1839; Anon. 1840). It was Hodgkin who produced the BAAS's "extensive, well-organised set of queries relative to foreign people and cultures" for travelers and colonists, which was published in 1841 (Rainger, 1980, 713).

George Grey's linguistic and ethnographic researches in Western Australia were of particular interest to the sub-committee, and he was in regular communication with

its members about the project. An honorary member of the APS himself, his scientific correspondence with members of the sub-committee was entirely complementary to his reputation as a humanitarian governor. As Grant notes, “As individuals and as a body, the [APS] ... eulogized Grey’s benevolence and ‘sound policy towards the natives’” (Grant, 2005, 36). Stocking describes Grey as “one of the more perceptive ethnographers of his day and author of some of the most influential ethnographic work of the century” (Stocking, 1987, 81). But throughout, Grey’s ethnography and his governmentality were inseparable projects, empowered through his overlapping networks of correspondents in governmental, scientific and humanitarian arenas, including not just Hodgkin, Prichard and the APS and BAAS, but also Thomas Huxley, Joseph Hooker, and Charles Lyell (Grant, 2005, and on the importance of scientific correspondence networks more generally, Endersby 2008).

In the *Vocabulary* to which his *Western Australia Report* was originally attached, Grey was scathing about “deistical writers” who dreamed that “savage man”, “urged on by his necessities, and aided by his senses”, might “step by step” climb to the “pinnacle of civilization” without some outside governmental intervention to change the basis of their social interaction, their laws and their customs (Quoted Stocking, 1987, 83). On the one hand, Grey recognised that God had granted Australian Aboriginal people a set of rules which enabled their survival in a harsh environment – one in which his own exploratory party would have perished without their help. Indeed, Grey’s identification of north-western Aboriginal Australians’ ability not only to survive in harsh environments, but to secure an abundance of resources, was a key inspiration for Marshall Sahlins’s famous characterisation of poverty as not “just a relation between means and ends”, but rather “a relation between people” (Sahlins 1974, 37-8).

However, Grey himself moved on from the observation of self-sufficiency to the advocacy of “civilization”. While they may enable a state of being beyond mere survival in harsh environments, Grey continued, aboriginal institutions, “allowed ‘no scope whatever’ for the development of intellect or benevolence, ‘were surely not beneficial to human beings as rational creatures’, and were especially punitive of young women effectively enslaved to the desires of older men” (Stocking, 1987, 84). If God had intended Aboriginal society to persist in its current state for the last few millennia, it was also clear to Grey that the “wizard wand” of British colonial governance, brought more recently to bear upon that society, was part of the same Divine providence. God had now “set in motion a ‘progress of civilization’ governed by laws as ‘certain and definite’ as those of planetary movement” (Stocking, 1987, 84). The imperative for those, like himself, charged with governmentality was to ensure that, “if they survived extinction” at the hands of settlers, who represented the first, destructive harbingers of civilization, Aboriginal people would not do so as “a despised and inferior race” (Grey, quoted Stocking, 1987, 84, my emphasis).

Grey’s early Aboriginal vocabularies were just the beginning of a prolific publishing career in and on Aboriginal Australians, Native Americans and Māori, upon which there is no space to elaborate here (see Grey, 1841; Stocking, 1987; Grant, 2005). In the Cape Colony (1854-61), Grey’s collecting and his hiring of William Bleek as an assistant were more influential than his own writing. He took advantage of his privileged position as governor to solicit manuscripts and publications from across and beyond the British empire. Regular shipments not only of texts but also of plant and animal specimens and curiosities, enabled him to amass an enormous collection from most of sub-Saharan Africa, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands, which not only provided the basis for the South African National Library and

Museum in Cape Town, but also stimulated “a tremendous surge of writing on African linguistics and ethnology” (Thornton 1983a, 503). Employed as Grey’s librarian, Bleek became the most influential ethnographer of southern African peoples. Drawing upon his familiarity with Grey’s collections, Bleek coined the term “Bantu”, with its far-reaching historical effects (Bleek, 1858-9; Thornton, 1983b; Dubow, 1995, 78-9; Bank, 2000, 163-7). As Vansina points out, the term “came to designate, ambiguously, an imagined ‘race’, a conjectured common history, a family of languages, a zeitgeist or worldview, a ‘stage’ or civilisation”, or a culture (Vansina 1979, 80). In the same way as “Aryan” in Europe, “the word entered the everyday vocabulary of the European languages, especially as these were spoken in Africa, with similar political consequences” (Thornton 1983, 511-2).

As southern African historians know all too well, Grey pursued his amalgamationist vision most ruthlessly in the Cape Colony. There, his governorship coincided with (and helped to exacerbate) an existential crisis among those Xhosa polities bordering the colony. Following sequential losses of grazing land, successive attempts to regain it militarily (each of which had been punished with the confiscation of more land), and the spread of lungsickness further raising mortality among their cattle, from 1856 tens of thousands of Xhosa placed desperate faith in the prophecies of the prophet Nongqawuse. She predicted that the sacrificial slaughter of remaining cattle would prompt the ancestors to arise and sweep the British away from the land once and for all. Grey capitalized on the ensuing catastrophe, known as the Great Xhosa Cattle Killing, in 1857, in which some 30,000 people starved to death. He reduced surviving Xhosa to a dependence on work for welfare programmes, employing them in building roads which would enable more effective crushing of future resistance to colonial expansion (Peires 1989, Lester 2001). Yet

his humanitarianism was unquestioned. In 1863 after his 'successes' in the Cape, David Livingstone told him that "a word from you" on the need to act against the African slave trade, "is ever valuable and exhilarating" (Grant, 2005, 36, 46). As Dale observes, "In his position as administrator and ethnographer, Grey [was] both the scribe of a 'vanishing' culture and ... the instrument of deliverance from that culture" (Dale, 2006, 30). It was precisely during the crisis of the Cattle Killing movement that Grey most avidly collected Xhosa publications to compile an ethnography of this particular, apparently, dying race.

If Grey had established a reputation as a great and influential ethnographer, in the early 1860s, by which time he had governed South Australia, New Zealand (twice) and the Cape Colony, he was also being promoted in Britain and its empire as a model governor. It was this which gave his academic work what would now be called impact. Among his promoters was Herman Merivale, Professor of Political Economy at Oxford from 1837 to 1842 and then, by virtue of his published *Lectures on Colonization and Colonies* (Merivale 1841, reprinted with additions, 1861), Assistant and then Permanent Under-Secretary for the colonies at the Colonial Office from 1847. From 1860, Merivale provided a significant connection between the governance of the two major spheres of the British Empire as he moved from the administration of the Crown Colonies to that of British India as Permanent Under-Secretary at the India Office (Stephen 2004). Merivale's *Lectures* were cited by Marx in *Capital* as well as being a great influence on Trollope and, of course, in the exercise of imperial administration on a daily basis (Marx 1887, 439, 539; Hall, 2002, 212-3). Lorimer asserts that his liberal "form of reasoning has a more central place in Victorian racial discourse than that of his eccentric contemporaries [and biological determinists] Robert Knox and James Hunt" (2013, 175).

Merivale made use of Grey as his informant on indigenous peoples and the best ways of administering them within an empire which took pride in its anti-slavery tradition. For him, Grey was “an observer who has studied with no common diligence and success the characteristics of the natives” (Merivale 1861, 499). From Grey Merivale drew the lesson as an academic, and then applied it as an official, that “the colonial authorities should act upon the assumption that they have the right, in virtue of the relative position of civilised and Christian men to savages ... to enforce outwards conformity to the law of what we would regard as better instructed reason” (Merivale 1861, 503). Merivale became the key means by which Grey’s writings circulated not just among other governors and the Colonial Office, but within a broader British public. His relationship with Grey exposes the *processes* (rather than just rhetoric) that transformed colonised peoples into endangered subjects which, in turn, rationalised a very particular kind of liberal intervention and governance.²

In particular, it was Grey’s posited alternative futures for Indigenous peoples that Merivale helped to disseminate and implement. “What is the ultimate destiny of those races whose interests we are now discovering?”, he asked. The answer was that “There are only three alternatives which imagination can itself suggest”. The first was a process by now becoming widely accepted as probably inevitable: “The extermination of native races”. The second was the outcome towards which existing policies of Protection were aimed: “Their civilization, complete or partial by retaining them, as insulated bodies of men, carefully removed, during the civilizing process, from the injury of European contact”. The third was Grey’s particular innovation: “Their amalgamation with the colonists”. Merivale rationalised Grey’s choice:

² My thanks to Sadiya Qureshi for this important point.

Those who hold the opinion that the first is inevitable, are happily relieved from the trouble of all these considerations. Their only object must be to ensure that the inevitable end be not precipitated by cruelty or injustice. The second alternative I cannot but believe to be impossible. Instruction in segregated communities is only to be carried on under the defence of laws hedging them in from all foreign intercourse with a strictness impracticable in the present state of the world... long before the seeds of civilization have made any effectual shoot, the little nursery is surrounded by the advance of the European population; the demand for the land of the natives become urgent and irresistible, and pupils and instructors are driven out into the wilderness to commence their work again. There remains only the third alternative; that of amalgamation. And this I am most anxious to impress upon your minds, because I firmly believe it to be the very keystone, the leading principle of all sound theory on the subject – that native races must in every instance either perish, or be amalgamated with the general [settler] population of their country (Merivale, 1861, 510-11).

“By amalgamation”, Merivale continued, “I mean the union of natives with settlers in the same community, as master and servant, as fellow labourers, as fellow citizens and if possible as connected by inter-marriage” (Merivale, 1861, 511). Here, in the 1861 edition of his *Lectures*, Merivale added a footnote: ‘This last kind of connection (of master and servant), has been carried out with more success in South Africa than in any other British possession ... on the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony (especially since the strange collapse of the Caffre [Xhosa] power, under the influence of scarcity and superstition in 1857-8), great numbers of natives appear to have taken voluntary service under the settlers, and to have performed it with

reasonable steadiness ... the experiment was superintended by one of those men who seem to possess the rare faculty of entering into the savage mind, and becoming themselves intelligible to it, the governor, Sir George Grey' (Merivale, 1861, fn. 511).

Conclusion

Grey utilised the expectation that indigenous peoples were inexorably dying out when confronted by a superior civilization – an expectation engendered through the networks of both scientific and humanitarian men such as Hodgkin and Prichard - to bolster his own credentials as one of their most valuable ethnographic chroniclers. But his more striking innovation was to establish the supposition that any government which did more than simply making their extinction as painless as possible was perpetuating *humanitarian* governance beyond the initial, now failed, period of Protection. Grey's programme of governmentality was founded not only upon the survival, but also the redemptive development of indigenous individuals through their amalgamation with settlers. In setting out this agenda, in disseminating it so effectively through both scientific and governmental networks, and in helping to effect its implementation as policy both in those colonies that he governed himself and in others subject to Colonial Office oversight, Grey can be seen as one of the true progenitors of those practices that have come to be seen within settler colonial studies as eliminationist.

Thanks to his benign, assimilationist interventions, Grey and others could claim, individuals of indigenous descent, released from the failed "nurseries" of their own, the Protectors' and the missionaries' land holdings, and thus from territory, would survive the death of the cultures that had circumscribed previous generations. As

Merivale concluded, “amalgamation, by some means or other, is the only possible Euthanasia of savage communities” (1841/61, 512). Later anthropologists with some governmental influence such as those analysed by Wolfe (1999) were following very much in Grey’s footsteps when they advocated policies of Aboriginal family-break up.

The only alternative to such amalgamationist measures, after all, was eradication. Dating from the very accomplishment of settler invasion, Grey’s own, and others’ ethnography established a very low threshold for what qualified as humane intervention in settler colonial societies: the maintenance of ‘bare life’ at an atomised individual, rather than a social scale (Agamben, 1998). In offering a programme for Indigenous peoples’ future welfare as assimilated subjects Grey seemed to offer more than this. He offered emigrant and metropolitan Britons a liberal empire founded on violent dispossession and cultural genocide without culpability for the physical eradication of races.

It mattered greatly that ethnography was pursued not just by state functionaries and officials and not just in support of governmental projects that were independently conceived and articulated, but that it was also engendered by governing men themselves, and by one in particular. The enigmatic George Grey was a critical figure in this articulation between ethnography and colonial governance. He was an embodied focal point of particular capacity in much larger assemblages of both colonial governmentality and ethnographic understanding. Grey was able to achieve this status partly by virtue of his extraordinary individual mobility, and partly through his spatially extensive textual and material networking *in situ*. The combination of his geographical and his expressive adroitness, facilitated by the enhanced communications and transport networks of a growing empire, enabled him especially

to provide Britons with a narrative through which they could legitimate empire without biological determinism or the extremes of scientific racism.

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